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CORRESPONDENCE between the SECRETARY  
of STATE for the HOME DEPARTMENT and the  
GOVERNORS, or other CIVIL AUTHORITIES, in  
the WEST INDIES, in consequence of the Address  
of the House of Commons of the 6th of April 1797,  
respecting the NEGROES in the WEST INDIES.

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*Ordered to be printed 22d March 1798.*

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—I.—

Copy of a CIRCULAR LETTER from the Duke of  
PORTLAND to the Governors of the West India Islands; dated  
Whitehall, 6th May 1797.

(One Inclosure.)

CIRCULAR.

Whitehall, 6th May 1797.

MY LORD, or SIR,

I HAVE received His Majesty's Commands to transmit to *your Lordship* the inclosed Resolution of the House of Commons of the 6th of April last, respecting the Negroes in His Majesty's Plantations in the West Indies; and to signify to you His Royal Pleasure, that you should take the earliest Opportunity of communicating it to the Council and Assembly of the Island of \_\_\_\_\_ to whose particular Attention and Consideration you will recommend the Formation of such a System of Measures, as may appear to them best suited to the Attainment of the several important Objects which are specified in the Resolution. *Your Lordship* will not fail to transmit to me from, Time to Time, Accounts of the Proceedings of the Legislature of your Island in consequence of this Communication; and I desire you will take Care in your first Dispatches, to inform me whether any Measures have been already taken by the Legislature of the Island which may tend to promote the Purposes expressed by the Resolution of the House of Commons; and you will also be attentive at all Times, to avail yourself of every Opportunity of cultivating and improving the Disposition you observe in the Planters and Inhabitants, to promote the humane and benevolent Views which the Legislature of this Kingdom has so eminently manifested in the Resolution which is herewith transmitted to you.

I am, &c.

PORTLAND.

Copy



Copy of a RESOLUTION of the HOUSE OF COMMONS,  
dated 6th of April 1797.

(In Circular Letter from the Duke of PORTLAND to the Governors  
of the West India Islands, of 6th May 1797.)

“ *Resolved*,—THAT an humble Address be presented to His Majesty,  
“ requesting that His Majesty will be graciously pleased to give Direc-  
“ tions to the Governors of His Majesty’s Plantations in the West Indies;  
“ to recommend to the respective Councils and Assemblies of the said  
“ Plantations, to adopt such Measures as shall appear to them best calcu-  
“ lated to obviate the Causes which have hitherto impeded the natural  
“ Increase of the Negroes already in the Islands, gradually to diminish  
“ the Necessity of the Slave Trade, and ultimately to lead to its com-  
“ plete Termination; and particularly with a View to the same Effect,  
“ to employ such Means as may conduce to the moral and religious  
“ Improvement of the Negroes, and secure to them throughout all the  
“ British West India Islands, the certain, immediate, and active Protec-  
“ tion of the Law; and at the same Time assuring His Majesty, that this  
“ House will concur in such Measures as shall appear requisite to be  
“ taken by this House for the Attainment of the same Object.”

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Copy of a LETTER from Governor RICKETTS to his  
Grace the Duke of PORTLAND; dated Barbadoes, 5th July  
1797.

Barbadoes, 5th July 1797.

MY LORD,

I HAVE the Honour to acknowledge the Duplicate of Your Grace's Circular Letter of the 6th of May, the Original not having yet come to Hand. In obedience to His Majesty's Commands, I shall take the earliest Opportunity of communicating to the Council and Assembly of this Island the accompanying Resolution of the House of Commons, and shall be most happy in suggesting and promoting every Measure that may give Effect to the benevolent Views of the British Legislature, relative to encreasing the Happiness and maintaining the Population of the Slaves. I am not aware of any recent Measures adopted here that make an Alteration in the former System; but I will avail myself of every Opportunity to transmit to your Grace such Proceedings of the Legislative Bodies of this Colony, as may result from the Communication with which I am now honoured.

I beg Leave to subscribe myself, with great Respect,

My Lord, &c.

(Signed)

G. P. RICKETTS.

*His Grace the Duke of Portland, &c. &c. &c.*



Copy of a LETTER from Mr. President MATSON to  
his Grace the Duke of PORTLAND; dated Dominica, 10th  
July 1797.

Dominica, 10th July 1797.

MY LORD,

BY the Packet which arrived Yesterday, I had the Honour to receive your Grace's Circular Duplicate Letter of the 6th of May, accompanied with a Resolution of the House of Commons of the 6th April last, respecting the Negroes in His Majesty's Plantations in the West Indies. I will not fail to avail myself of the earliest Opportunity of obeying His Majesty's Commands, by communicating the Resolution to the Council and Assembly of this Island, and recommending to their particular Attention and Consideration, the Formation of such a System of Measures as may appear to them best suited to the Attainment of the several important Objects which are therein specified.

Your Grace may rest assured, that while I remain in this Government I will not omit to transmit to your Grace, from Time to Time, Accounts of the Proceedings of the Legislature of this Island, in consequence of the above Communication.

I have the Honour to be, &c.

(Signed) J. MATSON.

*His Grace the Duke of Portland, &c. &c. &c.*



Copy of a LETTER from Governor SETON to his Grace the  
Duke of PORTLAND; dated St. Vincent's, 12th July 1797.

(One Inclosure.)

St. Vincent's, 12th July 1797.

MY LORD,

HEREWITH I have the Honour to transmit your Grace a Copy of the  
Answer I have this Day received from the Council and Assembly,  
in consequence of the Communication made to them of your Grace's  
Letter, Circular, of the 6th of May, and the Resolution of the House of  
Commons of the 6th April, relative to the Slave Trade.

I have the Honour, &c.

(Signed) J A<sup>s</sup>. SETON.

*His Grace the Duke of Portland, &c. &c. &c.*

(In Governor SETON's, of 12th July 1797.)

His Honour the President and Council, the Speaker and  
Gentlemen of the Assembly, to His Excellency the Go-  
vernor in Chief.

IN reply to your Excellency's Communication of the Duke of  
Portland's Letter, and the Resolutions of the House of Commons of the  
6th April, we beg leave to observe, that the Slave Laws of this Colony  
are now under Consideration; we shall most readily adopt every Measure  
that can be suggested, which appears calculated to obviate the Causes  
(if any exist) that have hitherto impeded the natural Increase of the Ne-  
groes already in the Island; and assure your Excellency we shall be happy  
indeed, if we can devise such Means and Regulations that the Slave Trade  
may be gradually diminished, and in Time rendered totally unnecessary.

(Signed) J A<sup>s</sup>. HARTLEY,

President of the Council.

12th July 1797.

GEO. LOWMAN,

Speaker of the Assembly.



—5.—

Copy of a LETTER from the Earl of BALCARRES to  
his Grace the Duke of PORTLAND; dated Jamaica, 20th  
August 1797.

Jamaica, August 20th, 1797.

MY LORD DUKE,

6 May  
1797.

I HAVE the Honour to acknowledge the Receipt of your Grace's Letter, dated as per Margin, which I immediately sent to the Council and House of Assembly, who were on the Eve of being prorogued.

Their Answer was, That they should take it into their early Consideration, at the next Meeting of the General Assembly, which will take place in November next.

I shall not fail to watch over and to report to your Grace the Progress of this Business; as also to report whether any Measures have been already taken by the Legislature of the Island, which may tend to promote the Purposes expressed by the Resolution of the House of Commons.

I have the Honour to be,

(Signed) BALCARRES.

*His Grace the Duke of Portland, &c. &c. &c.*



Extract of a LETTER from GOVERNOR GREEN to his  
Grace the Duke of PORTLAND; dated Grenada, 13th July  
1797.

I AM to acknowledge the Honour of your Grace's Letter, of the 6th May last, marked Duplicate and Circular, accompanied by a Resolution of the House of Commons of the 6th April last, respecting the Negroes in His Majesty's Plantations in the West Indies; and I shall not fail, in obedience to His Majesty's Commands, to take the earliest Opportunity of communicating the said Resolution to the Council and Assembly of this Colony, and at the same Time of recommending to their particular Attention and Consideration, the Formation of such a System of Measures as may appear to them best suited to the Attainment of the several important Objects therein specified.

I shall take Care, in conformity to your Grace's Instructions, to transmit from Time to Time to your Grace, Accounts of the Proceedings of the Legislature of this Island in consequence of that Communication; and I beg Leave to assure your Grace, that I shall be attentive to avail myself of every Opportunity of cultivating and improving such Dispositions as I may observe in the Planters and Inhabitants, to promote the humane and benevolent Views which the Legislature of Great Britain has so eminently manifested, in the Resolution which has been transmitted to me.

An Act of the Legislature of this Island, commonly called the Guardian Act, which contained many Provisions tending to promote the Purposes expressed in the Resolution of the House of Commons, was in Force for Four Years, and expired in the Year 1792. In the Beginning of the following Year it was renewed, but the Disturbances which soon after happened, put an End to its Operation. Some Months ago, a Bill was brought into the House of Assembly, the Object of which was, the better Protection of the Slaves, &c.; this Bill was ordered to be committed, but I presume some Difficulties have hitherto retarded its Progress; however, I make no Doubt that, on the First Meeting of the Legislature, which is to take place in a few Days, this Subject will be taken into immediate and serious Consideration.



—7.—

Extract of a LETTER from Governor GREEN to his Grace the Duke of PORTLAND; dated Grenada, 10th August 1797.

( Three Inclosures. )

IN obedience to His Majesty's Commands, conveyed to me in your Grace's Dispatch of the 6th May last, I have laid before the Council and Assembly, the Resolution of the House of Commons of the 6th April last, respecting the Negroes on His Majesty's Plantations in the West Indies. And I have now the Honour to transmit to your Grace, Copies of my Message on that Subject to the different Branches of the Legislature, and of their joint Resolutions thereupon.

I have the further Satisfaction to acquaint your Grace, that a Bill is now under the Consideration of the House of Assembly, the Provisions of which are made with a View to the Attainment of the important Objects expressed in the Resolution of the House of Commons before-mentioned; and I trust that it will soon be in that State of Forwardness to enable me to transmit it Home, to receive His Majesty's Approbation, or Disallowance.

(a. In Governor GREEN's, 10th August 1797.)

The GOVERNOR, to the Honourable the President and Members of His Majesty's Council.

THE Governor has received a Letter from his Grace the Duke of Portland, one of His Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State, dated 6th May last, transmitting to him, by the King's Commands, a Resolution of the Honourable House of Commons respecting the Negroes on His Majesty's Plantations in the West Indies, which Resolution the Governor, being directed to take the earliest Opportunity of communicating to the Council and Assembly of Grenada, he thinks he cannot do it more properly, than by laying before them, together with the said Resolution, a Copy of the Secretary of State's Letter on that Subject.

The near Interest which His Majesty and the House of Commons of Great Britain appear to have taken in the Welfare of the Colonies in the West Indies, is so clearly manifested by their Proceedings on this Occasion, and the Importance of the Matters thereby recommended to the Consideration



Consideration of the Legislature is at the same Time so evident, that it becomes entirely unnecessary for the Governor to add any thing further from himself, other than to assure the Council, that his most hearty and zealous Concurrence and Co-operation shall not be wanting to any Measures the Legislature may think proper to adopt for the Attainment of the essential Objects now submitted to their Deliberations.

(Signed)

CHA<sup>s</sup>. GREEN.

July 24th 1797.

A true Copy,

FRED<sup>k</sup> NEWCOME,  
Secretary.

Similar Message, Copy of the Secretary of State's Letter, and Resolution of the House of Commons, were sent at the same Time to the Assembly.

(b. In Governor Green's, 10th August 1797.)

The Speaker and Gentlemen of the Assembly, to his Excellency  
the Governor.

THIS House having taken into their Consideration your Excellency's Message of 24th Instant, communicating his Grace the Duke of Portland's Letter of 6th May last, inclosing the Resolution of the House of Commons respecting the Negroes on His Majesty's Plantations in the West Indies, have come to several Resolutions thereon, in which the Honourable Board of Council have concurred, and herewith transmit the said joint Resolutions for the Information of your Excellency.

(Signed)

JAMES HAY,  
Speaker.

House of Assembly,  
26th June 1797.

A true Copy,

FRED<sup>k</sup> NEWCOME,  
Secretary.

(c. In



(c. In Governor Green's, 10th April 1797.)

**EXTRACT** from the Minutes of the Assembly, 25th July 1797.

**RESOLVED**, That a Message be sent to His Excellency the Governor, thanking him for his Communication of his Grace the Duke of Portland's Letter of 6th May last, inclosing the Resolution of the House of Commons respecting the Negroes on His Majesty's Plantations in the West Indies, recommending the Adoption of such Measures as shall appear to the Legislature best calculated to obviate the Causes which have hitherto impeded the natural Increase of the Negroes in the Islands, and to employ such Means as may conduce to the moral and religious Improvement of the Negroes, and secure to them, throughout all the British West India Islands, the certain, immediate, and active Protection of the Law.

**RESOLVED**, That the Legislature of these Islands have not hitherto been remiss in their Endeavours to accomplish the above desirable Ends:—In the Year 1788, an Act was passed “for the better Protection, and for promoting the Increase and Population of Slaves, and other Purposes,” commonly called the Guardian Act, in which the Corporal Punishment of Slaves by their Masters was restricted, their Hour of Labour defined, a Sufficiency of Food and Cloathing provided, and the Clergymen of the different Parishes enjoined frequently to visit the Plantations, and instruct the Slaves in the Christian Religion, to baptize and marry them without Fee or Reward, and to administer the Sacrament to such as they might deem fit to receive it.—The Person of the Slave was thoroughly protected from any wanton or undue exercise of Power, and secured in every Benefit of the Laws; that this, or similar Acts, continued in Force till the Year 1793.—That previous to the breaking out of the Insurrection, there was a Guardian Bill again before the Legislature, which that very disastrous Event prevented being immediately passed into a Law.—That after Order and Peace had again been established in the Colony, a new Bill for the same Purposes was brought into the House of Assembly, on the 24th November last, and is now before the House.—That his Excellency may be assured, this House will, as speedily as possible, adopt whatever Measures shall appear to them necessary for fulfilling the Wishes of the Honourable the House of Commons, as expressed in their Resolution of 6th April last.

A true Extract,

A true Copy,  
FRED<sup>k</sup> NEWCOME,  
Secretary.

(Signed)

THO<sup>s</sup>. LYNCH,  
Clerk of the Assembly.



Extract of a LETTER from Mr. President THOMPSON to  
his Grace the Duke of PORTLAND; dated St. Christopher's,  
19th July 1797.

THE Resolution of the House of Commons of the 6th of April, inclosed in your Grace's Circular Letter, I have this Day laid before the Council and Assembly of this Island, and recommended the Objects contained in that Resolution to their most serious Consideration, and the Adoption of such Measures as, from their local Knowledge, they may deem most conducive to promote the humane and benevolent Views of the Legislature of our Parent State.—I shall also, without Delay, transmit Copies of the said Resolution, with the like Recommendation, to be submitted to the Councils and Assemblies of the respective Islands within this Government, which I hope will not fail to have the desired Effect. And I beg Leave to assure your Grace, that I shall not fail to avail myself of every favourable Inclination or Disposition which I may perceive in the Planters and other Inhabitants of these Islands, to effectuate the Purposes of the Resolution, and inform your Grace, from Time to Time, of all their Proceedings relative thereto.

I shall also, as soon as I can collect the necessary Information from the different Islands, acquaint your Grace, whether any Measures have been already taken by their respective Legislatures, tending to promote the Purposes expressed by the Resolution of the House of Commons.

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Extract of a LETTER from Mr. President THOMPSON  
to his Grace the Duke of PORTLAND; dated St. Christopher's,  
14th October 1797.

( Three Inclosures. )

I BEG Leave to inform your Grace, that I have lately received some Resolutions entered into by the Council and Assembly of the Island of Antigua, in consequence of the Resolution of the House of Commons of the 6th of April last, and an Extract of your Grace's Letter of the 6th of May, which I had laid before them, requesting me to convene a General Council and Assembly of the Leeward Islands, to take into Consideration the Resolution of the House of Commons; which Resolutions they wish me to transmit to your Grace, and which you will be pleased to receive inclosed, N° 1.

The Council and Assembly of this Island were also proceeding on the same Business, and their Committee had entered into several Resolutions, of which I send your Grace a Copy, N° 2, which will shew the Progress they had made, when this Application from the Council and Assembly of Antigua arrived; in which they have concurred, as your Grace will be pleased to observe by their Resolutions, which I also inclose, N° 3.

Hitherto the utmost Readiness has appeared in every Island of this Government, to set about the Adoption of such Measures as seemed to them best calculated to carry into Effect the Resolution of the House of Commons; and they now readily unite in the Application made by the Council and Assembly of Antigua, of forming a General Council and Assembly, to take the collective Sense of the whole Body on Matters so highly important in their Nature.

The calling together a General Council and Assembly for this Purpose, will be the Means of rendering all their Measures uniform and consistent, and will probably make them more wise and efficacious than if they had been separately formed by the respective Legislature of each Island.

I shall therefore acquiesce in the general Wish, and convoke a Meeting of the General Council and Assembly, with all the Expedition which the Forms necessary to be gone through for that Purpose will admit of, which Measure I hope will meet with your Grace's Approbation.

RESO-



RESOLUTIONS of the Council and Assembly of the Island  
of Antigua.

(N<sup>o</sup> 1.—In Mr. President THOMPSON'S, N<sup>o</sup>. 9 of the 14th October 1797.)

ANTIGUA.

At a Meeting of his Honour the President, and the following  
Members of the Council, by Adjournment, at the Court  
House, in the Town of Saint John, on Thursday the Third  
Day of August One thousand Seven hundred and Ninety-  
seven.

PRESENT.

The Honourable EDWARD BYAM, President.

THOMAS JARVIS,  
THOMAS N. KERBY,  
JAMES NIBBS,  
SAMUEL ATHILL,  
ROWLAND BURTON, and  
SAMUEL WATKINS, Esquires.

HIS Honour the President informed the Board that he had received  
a Letter from his Honour the Commander in Chief, accompanied by an  
Extract of a Letter from his Grace the Duke of Portland to his Honour,  
inclosing a Copy of a Resolution of the House of Commons on the 6th  
of April last, all of which he begged to communicate to the Two Houses,  
in pursuance of his Honour the Commander in Chief's Directions, with  
a View of availing himself of their Assistance to give his Honour the In-  
formation he requested. And the same having been read at the Board,  
they were sent down to the Gentlemen of the Assembly, with a Message  
from his Honour the President.

(Circular.)  
SIR,

St. Christopher's, July 20th 1797.

I HAVE the Honour to inclose you an Extract from his Grace the  
Duke of Portland's Circular Letter of the 6th of May last, and likewise  
Copy of a Resolution of the House of Commons entered into on the  
6th of last April, which you will please to lay before the Two Houses of  
the Legislature of Antigua, and which I beg Leave to recommend to their  
most serious Consideration, and the Adoption of such Measures as, from  
their local Knowledge and Experience, may be most conducive to the  
Interest and Welfare of that Colony, and carrying the Purposes of the  
said



said Resolution into Effect, which are the great Objects His Majesty's Ministers have in Contemplation; and I beg you will assure them, that in this salutary and beneficial Design they may rely on my steady and constant Co-operation.

You will please to inform me, whether any Measures have been already taken by the Legislature of Antigua, which may tend to promote the Purposes expressed by the Resolution of the House of Commons, that I may transmit such Information to his Grace, agreeable to his Desire.

I have the Honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient, and

Most humble Servant,

(Signed) ROBT THOMPSON.

*The Hon. Edward Byam, Esquire.*

Extract of a LETTER from his Grace the Duke of PORT-  
LAND; dated May 6th 1797.

(Circular.)

(Duplicate.)

SIR,

I HAVE received His Majesty's Commands to transmit to you the inclosed Resolution of the House of Commons of the 6th of April last, respecting the Negroes in His Majesty's Plantations in the West Indies; and to signify to you His Royal Pleasure, that you should take the earliest Opportunity of communicating it to the Councils and Assemblies of the Leeward Islands, to whose particular Attention and Consideration you will recommend the Formation of such a System of Measures, as may appear to them best suited to the Attainment of the several important Objects which are specified in the Resolution. You will not fail to transmit to me, from Time to Time, Accounts of the Proceedings of the Legislatures of your Islands, in consequence of this Communication; and I desire you will take Care, in your first Dispatches, to inform me, whether any Measures have been already taken by the Legislatures of the Islands, which may tend to promote the Purposes expressed by the Resolution of the House of Commons.

*Jovis, 6<sup>o</sup> die Aprilis 1797.*

*Resolved,* That an humble Address be presented to His Majesty, requesting that His Majesty will be graciously pleased to give Directions  
to



to the Governors of His Majesty's Plantations in the West Indies, to recommend to the respective Councils and Assemblies of the said Plantations; to adopt such Measures as shall appear to them best calculated to obviate the Causes which have hitherto impeded the natural Increase of the Negroes already in the Islands, gradually to diminish the Necessity of the Slave Trade, and ultimately to lead to its complete Termination; and particularly, with a View to the same Effect, to employ such Means as may conduce to the moral and religious Improvement of the Negroes, and secure to them throughout all the British West India Islands, the certain, immediate, and active Protection of the Law; and at the same Time assuring His Majesty, that this House will concur in such Measures, as shall appear requisite to be taken by this House for the Attainment of the same Object.

His Honour the President in Council to the Gentlemen of the Assembly.

GENTLEMEN,

IN pursuance of the Directions of his Honour the Commander in Chief, I now send, for the Information of your House, a Letter received from him by me, accompanied by an Extract of a Letter from his Grace the Duke of Portland to his Honour, inclosing a Copy of a Resolution of the House of Commons on the 6th of April last, all which have been communicated to His Majesty's Council, with the View of availing myself of the Assistance of the Two Houses, to give his Honour the Information he requests.

By Command,

(Signed)

W<sup>M</sup>. MATHEWS.

Dep<sup>y</sup> Sec<sup>y</sup>.

Council Chamber,  
August 3d 1797.



*ANTIGUA.*

At a Meeting of his Honour the President, and the following Members of the Council, by Adjournment, at the Court House, in the Town of St. John, on Thursday the Twenty-fourth Day of August One thousand Seven hundred and Ninety-seven.

PRESENT,

The Honourable EDWARD BYAM, President.

THOMAS JARVIS,

THOMAS N. KERBY,

JAMES NIBBS,

SAMUEL ATHILL,

ROWLAND BRETON, and

SAMUEL WATKINS, Esquires.

The Gentlemen of the Assembly to his Honour the President and Council.

THIS House, having taken into Consideration the Circular Letter of the Sixth of April last, from his Grace the Duke of Portland, thinks, that the Matters contained in that Letter, are of such great Importance to the Welfare, if not the Existence, of the West India Sugar Colonies, that it will be proper to take, as far as may be possible, the Sense of the different Islands within this Government upon the Subject, by a General Assembly of the Leeward Charibbee Islands; and if your Board agrees with us in Opinion, we desire your Concurrence, that his Honour the President should be requested to apply to his Honour the Commander in Chief, to convene a General Council and Assembly of the Leeward Charibbee Islands, according to the Laws already made for that Purpose.

(Signed) JOHN BURKE,  
Speaker pro Tempore.

His Honour the President and Council, to the Gentlemen of the Assembly.

GENTLEMEN,

THIS Board concurs in Opinion with your House, that the Circular Letter of the 6th of April last, from his Grace the Duke of Portland, is upon a Subject of such great Importance to the Welfare, if not the Existence, of the West India Sugar Colonies, that it will be proper to take, as far as may be possible, the Sense of the different Islands within this Government



Government upon it, by a General Council and Assembly of the Leeward Charibbee Islands; and his Honour the President will take the earliest Opportunity to request his Honour the Commander in Chief, to convene a General Council and Assembly of the Leeward Charibbee Islands, according to the Laws of the Leeward Islands made for that Purpose, and now in Force.

And this Board is also of Opinion, if your House concurs therein, that a Copy of our joint Resolutions, as contained in the Messages which have passed this Day, should be transmitted by the President to his Honour the Commander in Chief, signifying at the same Time the Wishes of the Two Houses, that his Honour would be pleased to forward the same to his Grace the Duke of Portland, in order to manifest the Intentions of this Island to give the Subject of his Letter the fullest Consideration as soon as possible.

By Command,

(Signed) WM. MATHEWS,  
Dep<sup>y</sup> Sec<sup>y</sup>.

Council Chamber,  
August 24th 1797.

The Gentlemen of the Assembly to his Honour the President and Council.

THIS House readily concurs in Opinion with your Board, that a Copy of our joint Resolutions upon the Subject of his Grace the Duke of Portland's Letter, should be transmitted by the President to his Honour the Commander in Chief, signifying at the same Time the Wishes of the Two Houses, that his Honour would be pleased to forward the same to his Grace the Duke of Portland, in order to manifest the Intentions of this Island to give the Subject the fullest Consideration as soon as possible.

(Signed) JOHN BURKE,  
Speaker pro Tempore.

Antigua, August 25th 1797.

True Copies from the Council Minutes.

W<sup>m</sup>. Mathews,  
Dep<sup>y</sup> Sec<sup>y</sup>.



N<sup>o</sup> 2.—RESOLUTIONS of the Committee of the Council and Assembly of St. Christopher's, appointed in consequence of the Resolution of the House of Commons of the 6th of April being laid before them.

REPORT of the Committee appointed to examine all the Laws respecting the Government of Slaves by their Owners, and to examine into the Proceedings of the Courts of Justice, where Persons have been tried and punished for Offences committed against Slaves.

THE Committee, in examining the Acts of the Island relating to the better Government of Slaves, find, that though the Necessity of the Case made it essential, at the first Settlement of the Colony, to pass several severe Laws in order to preserve Subordination and good Order, yet few, if any, Instances have happened where the Rigour of those Acts have been enforced. On this Subject your Committee are of Opinion, that such Acts should be as soon as possible revised, corrected, and consolidated, as may appear expedient.

Your Committee have observed, that wherever the Legislature found any Grievances existing contrary to the Rights of Humanity, they have always adopted Remedies against their Continuance.

In the former Exercise of the Rights of Ownership, Three or Four Instances only having occurred of Masters having maimed or mutilated their Slaves; the Legislature passed an Act (A) inflicting the heaviest Penalties on Persons guilty of such Offences, which has been found effectually to have remedied the Evil.

The Legislature have likewise shewn a marked Attention to the Rights of the Negroes, by passing an Act for preventing White or Free Persons from beating or ill-treating them, or taking away from them any of their Property.—It was the Practice of some of the lower Class of White Persons to beat and ill-treat the Negroes, and frequently to take from them any Articles which they carried to Town for Sale, upon the Presumption that as the Slave could not produce sufficient Testimony, it was impossible that he could obtain any Remedy. The Legislature, therefore, have authorized the Owner of the Slave, who has received any Injury from any Person whatsoever, to apply to a Magistrate, who is authorized fully to examine the Person accused on Oath, and to give ample Remedy to the Party injured in case of Conviction. (B)

It does not appear to your Committee, that any other Laws are necessary for the Purpose of giving Protection to Slaves against any Persons who shall commit Acts of Violence or Injustice towards them, as they find, on Examination of the Court Records, that the Criminal Courts of Justice have always taken Cognizance of barbarous Treatment of Slaves in the same Manner as Crimes of a similar Nature committed against White and Free People.

Your



Your Committee, therefore, observe with great Satisfaction, that the Laws of the Island have afforded ample Protection to Slaves, and after a thorough Investigation of the general Treatment of Slaves in this Island, we are of Opinion that it is humane.

Your Committee, in the Course of their Enquiries, found it necessary, for the complete Purpose of giving Comfort to the Slaves (without encroaching at the same Time on the Rights and Power of their Masters) to examine into their present Situation, in order to discover if any Measures were proper to be adopted for their Amelioration. From this Examination they are clearly of Opinion, that some Considerations, which call very much for the Interposition of the Legislature, ought particularly to engage their Attention.

Observing with Regret that the Severity of our Laws, which make a Slave not only liable for his Master's Debt, and immediately subject to a cruel Imprisonment, but which drags him from his little Settlement, his House, his Land, his Family, and Relations, convicted of no Crime whatever, but liable to suffer all these Misfortunes because his Master happens to be indebted, your Committee think some Provision should be made against Negroes being liable to be sold for their Master's Debt; and that they should become attached to the Soil, and consider themselves as enjoying a Sort of Fee-simple Right therein.

Your Committee is further of Opinion, that it would tend very much to the Interests of their Masters, if the Legislature would ascertain the Quantity of Food and Raiment that the Masters should be compelled to give their Slaves; as there are Reasons to believe, that some Masters do not afford them a proportionate Quantity of either for their necessary Subsistence.

Your Committee cannot help observing on the Impolicy of the Measure usually adopted by Masters of Slaves, who generally calculate only on the Expences they incur by feeding and clothing them, without adverting to the additional Advantages that must accrue by adding as much as possible to their Comfort, and rendering their Minds easy, happy, and contented. A Slave, well fed and well clothed, will be able to perform double the Service of one indifferently fed or clothed; added to this, that when a Negro feels satisfied and contented, it is reasonable to suppose, that, by working more cheerfully, he will perform a greater Task than a Slave who goes repiningly and discontentedly to his Work, hungry and naked, and who, while performing his Task, has his Mind constantly engaged on the Means of providing Food as soon as his Labour is finished.

Your Committee think, therefore, that if a small Portion of Land was Yearly given to the Slaves to plant Fruit and Vegetables, that it would add very much to their Comfort, besides the Advantage that would be derived by the Inhabitants in having a plentiful Supply of Articles which are now found so scarce or dear.

Your Committee are of Opinion, that it would be advisable for the  
F Legislature



Legislature to adopt proper Means for securing to any Persons who shall sell any Quantity of Food and Raiment, as limited, for the Sustainance of any Slaves in this Island, a prior Lien on any Plantation or Freehold to the Amount of their Demands, as the Apprehension of losing their Debts by a Preference of former Liens, may prevent Merchants from affording Supplies essentially necessary to the Maintenance and Comfort of the Negroes, and consequently may also diminish the Value of that very Property, which would be rendered more competent to the Discharge of all Incumbrances by those Supplies.

Your Committee (while the Islands are charged with improper Conduct to their Slaves) cannot avoid representing to the House, that, considering the great Calamities they now labour under, those Persons are ungenerous and illiberal, who constantly accuse us of Inhumanity, while at the same Time they deprive us of the Means of affording greater Comfort to our Negroes, by continuing to burthen us with additional Taxes, to increase those already imposed, and to involve us in those Difficulties which ought not to be so severely felt even in better Times.

A. Act, N° 261, page 162. new Ed. }  
B. Act, N° 287, f. 6, page 199, D° }

WILL. WOODLEY,  
Chairman of Com. of Council.

JOHN TIJSON,  
Chairman of Com. of the Assembly.

Truly extracted from Council Minutes of  
St. Christopher's, 9th October 1797.

E. MOORE,  
Clerk of Council.

RESOLUTION of the Council and Assembly of St. Christopher's, in consequence of an Application from the Council and Assembly of Antigua to convene a General Council and Assembly of the Leeward Islands.

(N° 3.—In Mr. President Thompson's, N° 9, of 14th October 1797.)  
*St. CHRISTOPHER'S.*

At a Meeting of the Council and Assembly, at the Court House, in the Town of Basseterre, on Thursday the 5th Day of October 1797 ;

IT was by both Houses resolved, That they concur in the Resolutions entered into by the Council and Assembly of the Island of Antigua, as mentioned in Mr. President Byam's Letter, dated the 12th of September last, to the Commander in Chief.—And therefore further resolved, That his Honour be requested to convene a General Council and Assembly of the Leeward Islands, agreeably to the general Laws of the said Islands made for that Purpose.

A true Extract from Council Minutes.

E. MOORE,  
Clerk of Council.



Extract from the MINUTES of Assembly of Tobago,  
dated 29th August 1797.

The President and Members of Council to the Speaker and Members  
of the Assembly.

**T**HIS Board herewith sends, for the Consideration of your House,  
Copy of a Letter addressed to the President of this Board, from Sir  
William Young, Baronet, Chairman of the Committee of West India  
Planters in London, being Members of the British House of Commons:  
And this Board is of Opinion, that a joint Committee of both Branches  
of the Legislature should be appointed to take into Consideration the  
Resolution of the House of Commons of Great Britain, dated the 6th  
of April last, and recommended by His Majesty in a Letter from his  
Grace the Duke of Portland, one of His Majesty's Principal Secretaries  
of State, of Date the 6th of May last, to revise the Laws now in Force  
in this Colony, respecting the Government of Slaves; and to frame such  
other Laws as may conduce to their moral and religious Improvement,  
and to secure to them the certain, immediate, and active Protection of  
the Law in this Colony.

Should your House be of the same Opinion, you will be pleased to  
name Three Members of your House, to join the Honourable John  
Balfour and Thomas Currie, Esquires, Members appointed by this Board,  
to form a joint Committee for the above Purpose.

By Command,

(Signed)

PHIL. WILSON,  
Clerk of Council.

Council Chamber,  
29 August 1797.

Upon Motion made and seconded;

Resolved, That the House do concur with the Council in the latter  
Message, and that Three Members be appointed to join the Two Mem-  
bers nominated by the Council, in forming a joint Committee for carry-  
ing the same into Effect.

The following Message was then sent to the President and Council by  
Mr. Campbell and Mr. Allen:

The Speaker and Members of the Assembly to the Honourable the  
President and Members of Council.

This House concurs with your Honourable Board in the Expediency  
of appointing a joint Committee of the Two Branches of the Legisla-  
ture,



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ture, to take into Consideration the Letter of Sir William Young, dated the 7th of June last, and addressed to the Honourable the President of the Council, together with the several Papers therein referred to, and for that Purpose have appointed Mr. Glanville, Mr. Paterson, and Mr. Ruddack, to join the Two Members nominated by your Board in forming a joint Committee.

(Signed) GILBERT PETRIE, Speaker:

House of Assembly,  
29th August 1797.

And the said Members being returned, reported the Delivery thereof.

